



What is it?

Points To Remember About Psoriasis

- Psoriasis is an autoimmune disease that causes red, scaly skin.
- It is caused by genes, meaning it runs in families, but some outside factors can make it worse or trigger flares.
- Psoriasis can be hard to diagnose because it can look like other skin diseases.
- Your doctor may recommend creams, ultraviolet light therapy, prescription medications, shots, or some combination of these treatments.
- You may have to try a couple of different treatments before finding one that helps you.
- Joining a support group helps some people with psoriasis cope with the disease.

Psoriasis is a skin disease that causes red, scaly skin that may feel painful, swollen or hot.

If you have psoriasis, you are more likely to get some other conditions, including:

- Psoriatic arthritis, a condition that causes joint pain and swelling.
- Cardiovascular problems, which affect the heart and blood circulation system.
- Obesity.
- High blood pressure.
- Diabetes.

Some treatments for psoriasis can have serious side effects, so be sure to talk about them with your doctor and keep all your appointments.

Who gets it?

Anyone can get psoriasis, but it is more common in adults. Certain genes have been linked to psoriasis, so you are more likely to get it if someone else in your family has it.

What are the types?

There are several different types of psoriasis. Here are a few examples:

- Plaque psoriasis, which causes patches of skin that are red at the base and covered by silvery scales.
- Guttate psoriasis, which causes small, drop-shaped lesions on your trunk, limbs, and scalp. This type of psoriasis is most often triggered by upper respiratory infections, such as strep throat.
- Pustular psoriasis, which causes pus-filled blisters. Attacks or flares can be caused by medications, infections, stress, or certain chemicals.
- Inverse psoriasis, which causes smooth, red patches in folds of skin near the genitals, under the breasts or in the armpits. Rubbing and sweating can make this type of psoriasis worse.
- Erythrodermic psoriasis, which causes red and scaly skin over much of your body. This can be a reaction to a bad sunburn or taking certain medications, such as corticosteroids. It can also happen if you have a different type of psoriasis that is not well controlled. This type of psoriasis can be very serious, so if you have it, you should see a doctor immediately.

What are the symptoms?

Psoriasis usually causes patches of thick, red skin with silvery scales that itch or feel sore. These patches can show up anywhere on your body, but they usually occur on the elbows, knees, legs, scalp, lower back, face, palms, and soles of feet. They can also show up on your fingernails and toenails, genitals, and inside your mouth. You may find that your skin gets worse for a while, which is called a flare, and then improves.

What causes it?

Psoriasis is an autoimmune disease, which means that your body's immune system – which protects you from diseases – starts overacting and causing problems. If you have psoriasis, a type of white blood cells called the T cells become so active that they trigger other immune system responses, including swelling and fast turnover of skin cells.

Your skin cells grow deep in the skin and rise slowly to the surface. This is called cell turnover, and it usually takes about a month. If you have psoriasis, though, cell turnover can take only a

few days. Your skin cells rise too fast and pile up on the surface, causing your skin to look red and scaly.

Some things may cause a flare, meaning your psoriasis becomes worse for a while, including:

- Infections.
- Stress.
- Changes in the weather that dry out your skin.
- Certain medicines.
- Cuts, scratches or sunburns.

Certain genes have been linked to psoriasis, meaning it runs in families.

Is there a test?

Psoriasis can be hard to diagnose because it can look like other skin diseases. Your doctor may look at a small sample of your skin under a microscope to help them figure out if psoriasis is causing your skin condition.

How is it treated?

There are several different types of treatment for psoriasis. Your doctor may recommend that you try one of these or a combination of them:

- Topical treatment, which means putting creams on your skin.
- Light therapy, which involves a doctor shining an ultraviolet light on your skin or getting more sunlight. It's important that a doctor controls the amount of light you are getting from this therapy, because too much ultraviolet light may make your psoriasis worse.
- Systemic treatment, which can include taking prescription medicines or getting shots of medicine.

Who treats it?

Several types of health care professionals may treat you, including:

- Dermatologists, who treat skin problems.
- Internists, who diagnose and treat adults.

Living With It

Psoriasis is a chronic disease, which means it lasts a long time. You can take an active role in treating your psoriasis. Besides going to your doctor regularly, here are some things you can try to help manage your symptoms:

- Keeping your skin well moisturized.
- Staying healthy overall.
- Joining support groups or counseling to help you realize you are not alone in dealing with psoriasis and to share ideas for coping with the disease.

For More Info

U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

For additional information on specific medications, visit Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

American Academy of Dermatology

Website: <http://www.aad.org>

National Psoriasis Foundation

Website: <http://www.psoriasis.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov.

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)

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Psoriasis, Questions and Answers